

County Animal Control Services

“People Who Care”

The Animal Services Division of the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff’s department is located at 885 Oklahoma Avenue and Kansas Avenue, just off Highway 1, north of San Luis Obispo. The division is devoted to providing animal-related assistance to residents of San Luis Obispo County. The primary functions of the division include monitoring rabies control, promoting responsible pet ownership through public education and regulating and enforcing animal related laws in all areas of the County.

Authority

The California Penal Code §925 states: “The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts.

The investigations may be conducted on some selective basis each year, but the grand jury shall not duplicate any examination of financial statements which has been performed by or for the board of supervisors pursuant to Section 25250 of the Government Code; this provision shall not be construed to limit the power of the grand jury to investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county.

§ 925a establishes the authority for this inquiry as follows; “The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law.”

Method

The Grand Jury obtained the information through interviews, inspection of the Animal Services facility, and a review of documents and their web-site.

Narrative

During a meeting with the Manager of Animal Services, he presented an overview of the Division and answered questions. After the meeting, Grand Jurors toured the facility, visiting the administrative offices, food storage locker, areas where the animals are boarded, medical care and euthanasia room, and the cremation unit.

We then toured the yard and observed two volunteers playing with dogs and a Sheriff's Honor Farm inmate cleaning the general area outside the dog runs. Grand Jurors also examined the various specialized vehicles used by the department. The Grand Jury found no examples of inhumane or unsanitary conditions at the shelter. The shelter is clean and satisfactorily maintained.

We also examined excerpts of the practices, policies and procedures guidelines pertaining to the intake and processing of animals impounded or relinquished by owners, and reviewed the department's rescue and volunteers policies. We inquired into the methods used to promote animal adoptions and the division's co-operative efforts with private not-for-profit animal rescue agencies such as Woods Humane Society and Second Chance at Love.

We can report the following:

- **The Facility:** The complex of approximately 8,400 sq. feet, was constructed in 1975 on county property, and houses the offices, operating rooms, dog runs, cages for cats and other animal enclosures. These areas appeared to be clean and adequate for the animals confined. The capacity is as follows:
 - Fifty regular dog runs, two isolation dog runs, and eight quarantine dog runs.
 - 122 regular, sixteen isolation and sixteen quarantine individual cat cages. The space in a single cage is marginally adequate to allow for placement of food/water bowls, litter box, etc. Therefore, to provide adequate space for cats, the pass-through of two side-by-side cages are opened when possible, giving each animal two cage spaces.
 - Two rabbit hutches
 - One-quarter-acre livestock enclosure along with a small (150 sq. ft) livestock yard.
 - One rodent cage, one small reptile tank and one bird cage.

- **The Staff:** There are twenty-two Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions, but only twenty are funded in the 2004/05 budget due to current county budget constraints. The staff breakdown is:
 - One division manager
 - Seven administrative services personnel. (One position in this category is allocated but not filled).
 - Nine animal control officers. (Two positions in this category are allocated but not filled).
 - 3.5 FTE kennel positions
 - .5 FTE humane educator position
 - One departmental automation specialist
- **The Volunteers:** They are welcomed at the facility and provide essential services. Approximately thirty to forty volunteers are active with a core of about twelve. Volunteers contribute positively to the welfare of the animals and provide in excess of one hundred hours per week of service, saving the county the equivalent of 2.5 FTEs. The volunteers groom and walk the dogs as well as socialize the cats.
 - Before being accepted as a volunteer, each candidate is given an application to complete, along with written guidelines to be followed. After filling out the application, the volunteer signs a waiver releasing the county from liability.
 - Volunteers are covered by workers' compensation by the County. When we inquired about record-keeping associated with this coverage, we found there is no formal system for logging the hours served by individual volunteers. A computer program is being developed to acquire this data.
 - Sheriff's Department Honor Farm inmates also work at the facility, providing approximately two inmates during the week and up to four on weekends.

The Animal Services budget for the fiscal year 2004/05 is \$1,909,000, of which 48% is from the County General Fund. The balance of funds is derived from licenses, fees and permits, service charges, and donations. The department has fee-for-service contracts with the seven cities in the county.

The services provided by the shelter are: adoption, lost & found, quarantine and protective custody, basic health screening and treatment of injured animals, issuance of dog licenses, humane euthanasia, educational programs relating to humane treatment, public safety and responsible pet ownership, investigating complaints, enforcement of state and local laws pertaining to animals, inspecting facilities and issuing permits to kennels, pet shop owners, animal breeders and other facilities.

The Animal Services Division works closely with the various private humane organizations (Animal Welfare Alliance) in order to facilitate adoptions of the dogs and cats under its control. In addition to adoption placement of abandoned animals, these private agencies often take animals for temporary housing and care when the shelter reaches capacity. One of the agencies, Woods Humane Society, currently accepts only class “A” (highly adoptable) dogs on a temporary basis. Woods has capacity to hold up to thirty adoptable dogs for approximately 48 hours. Other agencies have similar arrangements.

The County of San Luis Obispo has concluded a special agreement with Woods Humane Society. According to this agreement, Woods has signed a thirty-year lease (plus two five-year extensions) for 4.31 acres of land adjacent to the Animal Services facility, for which it pays one dollar per year. In return for this land, Woods will provide adoptions and licensing for a minimum of 350 homeless domestic dogs and cats annually for the County, thereby saving taxpayer funds. Construction has begun on the Woods’ state-of-the-art animal shelter and community service care facility.

- **Community Awareness:** The Animal Shelter’s web-site address is: www.slosheriff.org/animal_services.php. This website maintains an up-to-date database on most of the animals in the shelter; the exception being those animals in quarantine and confiscated animals. Photographs, where possible, are provided along with the vital statistics of the animals. Many of the volunteers also attend off-site adoption events, and do radio show spots. Through the Animal Welfare Alliance, adoptable animals are featured in newspaper ads monthly; and in videos broadcast on the local Cable Channel 2. Booths are set up at street fairs and public festivals throughout the year, especially at kids’ and pet fairs
- **Statistics:** One of the objectives of the San Luis Obispo County Animal Services is to avoid euthanizing animals that are adoptable. With the cooperation of the various private agencies and rescue organizations, and the public’s cooperation,

the division has not euthanized any adoptable animals in 2004. Here are some comparative figures:

Year	Total Incoming	Redeemed	Dead on Arrival	Adopted	Euthanized (*) not adoptable		
					Dogs	Cats	Others
2003	4,776	815	779	2,368	250	395	34
2004	4647	879	555	2488	198	161	62

(*) Euthanasia Categories:

- Adoptable: Policy decision-non-wildlife; space.
- Treatable: Behavior – aggressive/ timid; Kennel stressed/depressed.
- Treatable: Medical – contagious/treatable; Policy decision – wildlife; physical condition; unweaned.
- Non- rehabilitatable: Court order; behavior – dangerous; feral (wild).
- Medical – untreatable; owner request.

Conclusion

In 2004, the Animal Services Division did not perform euthanasia on any adoptable animals. This accomplishment is largely due to a high level of cooperation between the Division and the non-profit animal rescue organizations within the county.

In 2003, San Luis Obispo County achieved the fourth highest animal rescue rate in the nation. Furthermore, the Division's public awareness programs greatly assist with a high level of adoption. In 2005/06 and beyond, the land-lease agreement with Woods Humane Society will assist in maintaining euthanizing adoptable animals at a low level.

Volunteers play a vital role in filling the void created by three unfilled county positions.

The Animal Services Division is performing a necessary service to the community and carrying out a comprehensive program of handling animal problems, public awareness, care of animals and adoptions.

Dedication and commitment to the well-being of the animals under their care is evident at all levels of the organization – from the director through the volunteers.

Required Response

This is an informational report and no formal response is required.